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Psychologist accused of having sex with patient to oust demons

Associated Press

DENVER — A Cherry Creek psychologist has been arrested for allegedly convincing a female patient that she was possessed by demons and the only way to exorcise them was to have sex with him.

Mark Hammer, owner and director of Colorado Counseling Center, was arrested at his apartment on Friday by detectives who had executed a search warrant there, said Denver Police Department spokesman John Wyckoff.

His practice was closed by state officials earlier this year after patients complained of unusual methodology, officials said.

Hammer, 38, was arrested for investigation of sexual assault on a client by a psychotherapist, Wyckoff said. He was being held in lieu of $250,000 bond in the Denver County Jail. If convicted, he could be sentenced to up to eight years in prison.

Police were alerted to the case when the 33-year-old victim told police she had had a nearly year-long affair with Hammer, said Detective Bill Wickersham.

The woman told police she was a survivor of a satanic cult and that Hammer had diagnosed her with multiple personalities.

Hammer told the woman "she had demons and souls trapped in her body," Wickersham said. "God told him to take them out. He stated that one of her personalities had to be cleansed and the souls she possessed had to go to heaven."

The pair allegedly had sex on several occasions in motels and in Hammer's office. An employee at his office walked in on at least one occasion while the two were having sex, Wyckoff said.

"One of them came in one time when she was laying naked on the couch," he said.

But the affair ended after the woman switched therapists. Hammer's counseling center was closed in August after state officials received complaints about Hammer's practices.

Hammer's co-workers told investigators that his ideology and behavior caused harm to several patients.

"His office was adorned with ritualistic paraphernalia representing Indian shaman practice, such as artwork, drums, burnt candles, incense and books on magic."

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